

**WASHINGTON, DC— Representative Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) sent a letter today to the Secretary of Commerce, Carlos M. Gutierrez, expressing his concerns with the process that the Department of Commerce is undertaking to appoint members to the Pacific Fishery Management Council. Rep. DeFazio was joined in the letter by Rep. Nick Rahall, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, where DeFazio is a senior member.**

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“Oregon’s unique interest in maintaining a healthy commercial and recreational fishery has been honored for the last 32 years by appointing an at-large seat based on our state’s nomination,” DeFazio explained. “This year, however, the Department of Commerce is considering a nomination for the at-large seat that has been put forth by the Governor of Idaho. Although I don’t have anything against Idaho, no one can seriously argue that its interests in the Pacific Coast fishery are on par with Oregon’s. Oregonians need to be represented by someone who understands the needs of Oregon’s fishing interests.”

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils, established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which develop fishery management plans for federal commercial and recreational fishing in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. The Pacific Council is responsible for fisheries off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington. In March, the Governor of Oregon put forth a slate of candidates and recommended that Jeffery Feldner be appointed to the Council. The Governor of Idaho submitted a nomination for its preferred candidate, even though Idaho has never held an at-large seat on the Pacific Council. Idaho’s nominations additionally failed to comply with the statutory and regulatory requirements for nominations by the deadline for submissions.

“In addition to the special place Oregon occupies on the Council, which would be usurped if Secretary Gutierrez selects Idaho’s nominee over ours, I am concerned that Idaho’s nomination does not comply with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act,” DeFazio noted. “Idaho’s application package failed to comply with the consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and was incomplete by the regulatory deadline for consideration. Skirting the legal requirements for Council appointments adds to my concern that there’s something – pardon the pun – fishy going on with the appointment process.”